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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT — Monday, October 3, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CANNED FISH." Items of interest to consumers, from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Let's go fishing today. . . . The tide's just right. . . . The moon is full. . . . Maybe we'll catch a -- Well, to tell the truth, if we go fishing with our Washington correspondent, we'll catch a can of salmon, a can of shrimp, some tuna fish, sardines, mackerel -- and whitefish caviar.

For that's the kind of fish she's talking about today -- fish in cans -- fish from canneries periodically inspected by the Federal Food and Drug Administration.

Beginning with the salmon pack, last year the pack -- in cans -- amounted to nearly 350 million cans. Inspection of the canning plants and the examination of representative samples from shipments is, of course, a part of the routine work of the Food and Drug Administration. Inspecting salmon is a big job, and officials in the three big packing districts -- Alaska, Washington State, and the Columbia River areas -- are always busy during the canning seasons.

Nineteen thirty-seven was a good year for the salmon canners. It was not necessary to make any seizures of the 1937 pack. A big part of this improvement in the quality of salmon is due to increased efforts of the canners to correct packing conditions -- to get the fish delivered promptly to the canneries. Also, last year the weather was in their favor -- not too hot.

Now let's see about tuna. As all fishermen know, tuna fish are big news this fall. Just last month, a young man up in Shelburne, Nova Scotia, by the name of Alfred Kenney, broke the North American record for giant blue-fin tuna. He caught a fish that weighed 864 pounds. It took him four hours and 30 minutes to bring the fish to boat.

That's news of interest to men who follow the grand old sport of fishing--and here's news of interest to women who stay home and cook the fish that comes in cans.

In the United States, there are 20 tuna canneries -- all inspected, of course, several times a year. Most of the fish are caught off the coast of Mexico and Central America, but last year, for some reason known only to the tuna, they began running off the coast of Oregon. Also, recent tuna runs have been reported off the coast of Maine and Massachusetts. The Northwest run was of the Albacore variety, and represents very nearly all of the Albacore caught by American ships for canning purposes.

The Albacore, if you remember your labels, is the only fish that can properly be labeled "White Meat Tuna." It is relatively scarce, and therefore relatively expensive.

Last year we imported nearly 13 million tons of tuna -- raw tuna, sent over from Japan, for canning. This was detained for conditional entry. Raw tuna is shipped to this country in a hard-frozen condition, and Food and Drug officials cannot do a good job of inspecting until the fish is thawed out, and cooked. For that reason, all the raw tuna imported is detained at the port of entry on the assumption that any shipment may contain a small amount that is not good. As soon as this portion is sorted out and destroyed, the rest of the shipment is released.

Last year's imports of canned tuna -- most of it from Japan -- amounted to around 900,000 pounds. Some of this was not up to standard. In fact, the amount detained amounted to 160,000 pounds.

Attention was also given last year to a small industry on the shores of Lake Michigan, engaged in the production of fish roe, which eventually finds its way into the manufacture of "whitefish caviar." The original color of the fish roe is yellow, but when made into "caviar" it is black -- colored with a harmless vegetable coloring.

You may have bought some of this whitefish caviar. If so, you know that the label reads: "White fish caviar. Vegetable color added."

Canned mackerel and canned sardines came off with a good record last year. And the canned shrimp pack -- as we've heard before -- gets better all the time. It has been improving ever since, at the request of the canners, and consumer representatives, Congress enacted the Seafood Amendment, providing for Federal inspection. More than nine-tenths of all the canned shrimp we buy nowadays is packed under continuous Federal inspection. In these plants there is a Government inspector around all the time, supervising every step of the shrimp canning. Both canners and consumers benefit from this supervision.

In closing, our correspondent states: "As you can see, the Federal Food and Drug Administration has a mighty big job, and only a small force of men to get around to all the canneries, packing plants, and food factories they must inspect, in order to assure the public a good, wholesome, food supply."

And that's all of today's news letter from our correspondent with the Federal Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C.

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